

Role of the Economically Weaker Section Scheme in Social Development

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ABSTRACT

The Government of India has introduced several welfare policies and programmes to promote social justice and improve the quality of life of economically disadvantaged sections of society. Among these initiatives, the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme seeks to provide equitable opportunities in education, employment, and housing to economically weaker citizens who do not belong to the existing reserved categories. This paper examines the role of the Economically Weaker Section Scheme in promoting social development from a theoretical perspective. The study is based on the concepts and explanations presented in Social Problems in India, which emphasizes poverty, inequality, social exclusion, and the significance of state intervention in achieving inclusive development. Using a descriptive and analytical approach, the paper explores how the EWS Scheme contributes to social inclusion, equal opportunities, and the overall welfare of economically disadvantaged groups. It also discusses the challenges associated with the implementation of the scheme and its implications for reducing socio-economic disparities. The study concludes that although the EWS Scheme represents an important policy initiative for promoting social development, its effectiveness depends upon transparent implementation, awareness among beneficiaries, and continuous policy evaluation.

1. Introduction

"A society can be judged by how it treats its most vulnerable members. Ensuring equal opportunities for the economically weaker sections is not merely a matter of welfare but a foundation for social development."

Economic inequality and poverty remain among the most significant social problems confronting Indian society. Despite rapid economic growth, a substantial section of the population continues to experience limited access to quality education, employment opportunities, healthcare, housing, and other basic necessities. In *Social Problems in India*, explains that poverty, unemployment, social inequality, and unequal distribution of resources are closely interconnected social problems that hinder inclusive development. These structural inequalities restrict social mobility and prevent economically disadvantaged groups from participating fully in the process of national development.

Social development is a multidimensional process that aims to improve the quality of life of individuals by ensuring equal opportunities, social justice, human dignity, and access to essential resources. The Constitution of India emphasizes the principles of equality and social justice, and the Government of India has introduced various welfare policies and affirmative action programmes to reduce socioeconomic disparities. These initiatives seek to promote inclusive development by extending opportunities to disadvantaged sections of society.

One such significant initiative is the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme, introduced through the 103rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 2019. The scheme provides 10 percent reservation in admissions to educational institutions and appointments in government services for economically weaker individuals belonging to the General Category who are not covered under the existing reservation system for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). The primary objective of the scheme is to reduce economic inequalities and create equal opportunities for deserving individuals facing financial hardships. From a sociological perspective, as discussed by Ram Ahuja, welfare policies are essential instruments for addressing social problems arising from poverty, deprivation, and unequal access to resources. Government interventions such as the EWS Scheme represent efforts to promote social justice by reducing structural barriers and expanding opportunities for economically disadvantaged citizens. Such policies contribute to social development by encouraging educational attainment, improving employment prospects, and fostering greater social inclusion.

However, the effectiveness of any welfare policy depends not only on its objectives but also on its implementation, awareness among beneficiaries, transparency, and accessibility. Although the EWS Scheme has created new opportunities for economically weaker sections, debates continue regarding eligibility criteria, implementation challenges, and its overall contribution to reducing socio-economic inequalities. Against this background, the present paper examines the Role of the

Economically Weaker Section Scheme in Social Development from a theoretical perspective. Drawing upon the sociological insights presented by Ram Ahuja in *Social Problems in India*, the paper analyses the relationship between economic inequality, state welfare policies, and social development. It explores how the EWS Scheme seeks to promote equality of opportunity, social justice, and inclusive development while discussing its significance and limitations within the broader framework of India's social welfare system.

2.REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Ram Ahuja (2019) in *Social Problems in India* explains that poverty, unemployment, social inequality, and unequal distribution of resources are among the major social problems affecting Indian society. He argues that economic deprivation limits access to education, employment, healthcare, and other essential opportunities, thereby restricting social mobility. According to Ahuja, the role of the welfare state is crucial in addressing these inequalities through social policies and affirmative action programmes. His work provides the theoretical foundation for understanding how government interventions contribute to social justice and inclusive development.

Amartya Sen (1999), in *Development as Freedom*, emphasizes that development should be understood as the expansion of people's capabilities and freedoms rather than merely economic growth. He argues that equal access to education, employment, and public resources enables individuals to improve their quality of life. Sen's capability approach supports welfare measures such as the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme, which aims to create opportunities for economically disadvantaged groups and promote inclusive social development.

Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (2013), in *An Uncertain Glory: India and Its Contradictions*, discuss the persistent inequalities in Indian society despite economic progress. They argue that government intervention through effective social policies is essential to reduce poverty and ensure equitable distribution of opportunities. The authors emphasize that inclusive public policies strengthen social justice and contribute significantly to human development.

B. R. Ambedkar highlighted the importance of equality, social justice, and constitutional safeguards in creating an inclusive society. He believed that the State has a responsibility to remove structural inequalities and ensure equal opportunities for disadvantaged groups. His ideas continue to influence welfare policies and affirmative action programmes designed to promote social inclusion and reduce socio-economic disparities.

Government of India (2019) introduced the **Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Reservation** through the **103rd Constitutional Amendment Act**, providing 10 percent reservation in education and public employment for economically weaker individuals belonging to the General Category who are not covered under the existing reservation

system. The policy aims to improve access to educational and employment opportunities while promoting social justice and inclusive development. The effectiveness of the scheme, however, depends upon transparent implementation, proper identification of beneficiaries, and public awareness.

The above literature indicates that economic inequality remains one of the major barriers to social development. Scholars consistently emphasize that welfare policies and affirmative action are essential for reducing poverty, promoting equality of opportunity, and strengthening social justice. Drawing upon the theoretical perspective of Ram Ahuja, the present paper analyses the role of the Economically Weaker Section Scheme as an important welfare initiative for addressing socio-economic inequalities and promoting inclusive social development in India.

3.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Economic inequality, poverty, and unequal access to opportunities continue to be major social problems in India. Although the Government of India has introduced several welfare policies to promote social justice and inclusive development, the **Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme** is one of the most significant recent initiatives aimed at providing equal opportunities in education and public employment to economically disadvantaged individuals who are not covered under the existing reservation system. Since the scheme is relatively new, there is a need to understand its theoretical relevance and its role in addressing socio-economic inequalities. Drawing upon the sociological perspective presented by **Ram Ahuja** in *Social Problems in India*, the present study examines the relationship between economic inequality, state intervention, and social development. The study highlights how welfare policies such as the EWS Scheme contribute to reducing poverty, promoting equality of opportunity, and strengthening social justice. It also discusses the significance of affirmative action in enhancing educational and employment opportunities for economically weaker sections of society. The study is academically significant because it provides a theoretical understanding of the EWS Scheme within the broader framework of social problems and social development. It will be useful for researchers, students, policymakers, and social scientists interested in welfare policies, social inequality, and inclusive development. Furthermore, the study contributes to the existing literature by explaining the role of the EWS Scheme as an important instrument of social policy and by identifying the opportunities and challenges associated with its implementation from a sociological perspective.

4.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the role of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme in promoting social development.

2. To understand the EWS Scheme from the theoretical perspective of Ram Ahuja's *Social Problems in India*.
3. To analyse the role of the EWS Scheme in reducing socio-economic inequalities and promoting social justice.

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study is theoretical and descriptive in nature.

Sources of Data: The study is based entirely on secondary sources of data. Information has been collected from *Social Problems in India* by Ram Ahuja, government reports, books, research articles, journals, policy documents, and other relevant published literature.

Method of Analysis: The collected literature has been analysed using a descriptive and theoretical approach to examine the role of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme in promoting social development.

6. DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited to the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) Scheme and its role in social development.
2. The study is based primarily on the theoretical perspective presented in Ram Ahuja's *Social Problems in India* and other relevant secondary sources.
3. The study is confined to a theoretical and descriptive analysis and does not include any primary data collection or empirical investigation.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected for the present study depicts the level of awareness and accessibility of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) scheme among the respondents. Out of the total 50 respondents, a significant number of respondents were found to be aware of the benefits provided under the EWS scheme, while some respondents were still unaware of these provisions.

Table 1.0

Awareness regarding Eligibility Criteria by gender

Response	Male (M)	Male(%)	Female(F)	Female(%)	Total
Fully aware	17	34.0	13	26.0	30
Partially aware	23	46.0	25	50.0	48

Not aware	10	20.0	12	24.0	22
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	100

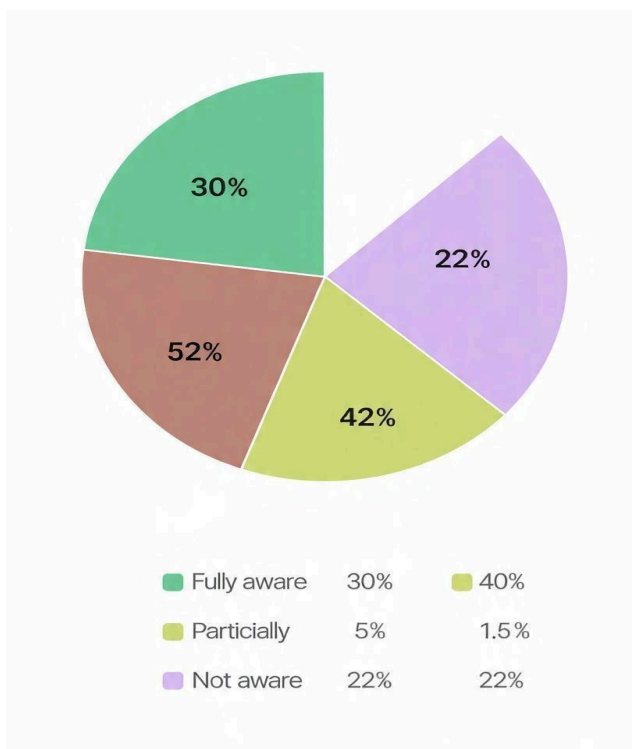


Fig 1.0

The data presented in Table 4.8 highlights the level of awareness among respondents regarding the eligibility criteria of the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) scheme. The findings reveal that 52% of respondents are partially aware of the eligibility criteria, indicating that more than half of the beneficiaries have some knowledge but lack complete information about the scheme requirements.

Further, 30% of respondents are fully aware of the eligibility criteria, showing that a significant section has proper knowledge about the provisions and conditions of the scheme. However, 22% of respondents are not aware of the eligibility criteria, reflecting gaps in information dissemination and awareness among economically weaker sections.

The results indicate that although awareness regarding the EWS scheme exists among people, complete understanding of eligibility conditions is still limited. This suggests the need for improved awareness campaigns, better communication through government agencies, and easier access to information to ensure that eligible beneficiaries can effectively avail the benefits of the scheme.

To be consistent the presented data is shown with the help of tables and charts:

Table 2
Knowledge regarding reservation benefits by gender

Response	Male(M)	Male(%)	Female(F)	Female(%)	Total
Yes	40	80.0	36	72.0	76
No	10	20.0	14	28.0	24
Total	50	100.0	50	100.0	100

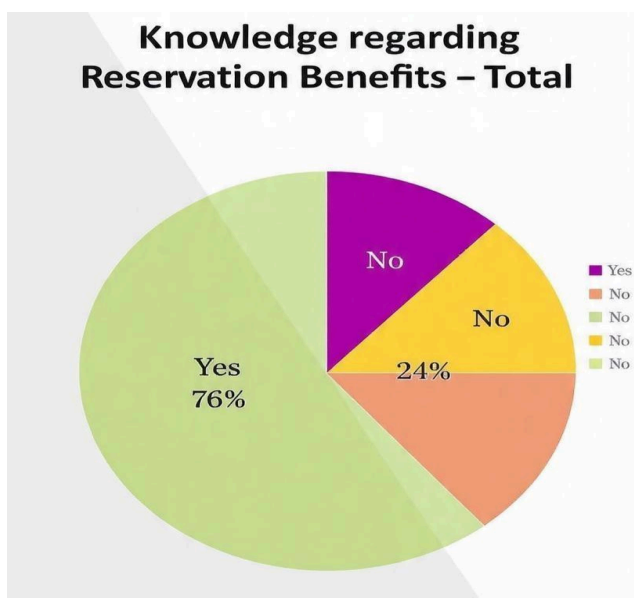


Fig 2.0

The above table represents the level of knowledge among respondents regarding the benefits of reservation policies. The findings show that 76% of the respondents are aware of reservation benefits, whereas 24% of the respondents do not have knowledge about these benefits.

The data indicates that a large majority of respondents have awareness regarding reservation provisions, which suggests that reservation policies have reached a significant section of society and are contributing towards social awareness and empowerment. Knowledge about reservation benefits can help economically weaker sections access opportunities in education, employment, and social development programmes.

However, the presence of 24% respondents without awareness highlights that some sections of society still lack proper information about these schemes. This gap may be due to limited access to information, lack of education, or inadequate awareness campaigns. Therefore, there is a need to strengthen awareness programmes and ensure that the benefits of reservation policies reach all eligible groups.

Overall, the result shows that reservation schemes play an important role in promoting social inclusion and development among economically weaker sections, but continuous efforts are required to improve awareness and accessibility.

8.CONCLUSION

Elderly women who belong to the slum areas constitute one of the most deprived and vulnerable section of our society. They are the ones who strongly need social security. Pension can help to enhance their financial status but the question arise “Does this vulnerable section of the society is being benefited by the schemes and policies implemented by the government?” and the reality is known to everyone that hardly the elderly women are being benefitted from it. There may be a number of reasons for it, but the ground reality lies in the fact that this particular group of elderly women of the society are lacking in approaching these beneficial programs. There are some who struggle a lot to receive old age pension and finally obtain it. Still a number of issues are associated with it, such as the delay in the time of the pension, the attitude of the bank employees and many more. There is a need to change in the system of government as well as the society.

Notes

- The Economically Weaker Section (EWS) scheme is an important step towards promoting social equality and inclusive development.
- It aims to provide opportunities to economically disadvantaged sections of society through reservation benefits and welfare measures.
- Social development focuses on improving the quality of life, equal participation, and empowerment of weaker sections.
- Government initiatives like EWS reservation help reduce socio-economic inequalities and promote equal access to education and employment.

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